



ANNAPOLIS RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT

invites you to become a friend of **BACK CREEK NATURE PARK**

The City of Annapolis sits as a gateway to one of the most treasured natural resources in our nation, the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay and its tributaries dominate Annapolis' geography and lend to its rich maritime history and culture. Back Creek is one such tributary that not only boasts its Bay connection, but also provides access to some of Annapolis' finest natural resources.

In 1990, Back Creek Park was designated a nature park and the City of Annapolis received a Program Open Space grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to fund the initial project. The park is situated on Back Creek near the mouth of the Severn River. It features:

- a conveniently located floating boat and fishing dock,
- over a mile of improved nature trails which provide an excellent opportunity to see a wide variety of native plants and wildlife,
- public restrooms located in a historic old waterworks building dating back from the turn of the last century,
- several water view picnic areas, and
- a grand gazebo atop a sandstone bluff overlooking Back Creek.

Given its out-of-the-way location at the eastern edge of the city, Back Creek Nature Park is a hidden treasure to many Annapolitans. It is frequented sporadically by the patrons of the many adjacent marinas and boat yards, as well as by nature enthusiasts who happen to stumble across this wonderful outdoor classroom. Through the years limited funding has prevented the City of Annapolis from taking advantage of the educational and recreational opportunities that would make this park even better and more enjoyable for all visitors. The City of Annapolis is now looking for people willing to give of their time and money in order to help improve the existing facilities and dramatically broaden the natural experience for park visitors of all ages. These new partners will become the nucleus for a "Friends of Back Creek Park" network and help to implement a park renaissance.

This brochure describes the key enhancement options that are under consideration. A map of the park showing these potential improvements is included.



Persimmon stand





trumpet vine



sweet gum

Pocket Gardens ~ The City of Annapolis would like to promote education about, appreciation for, and conservation of our native plants. Back Creek Nature Park can become a native plant education resource through the establishment of strategically placed “pocket gardens” that identify and protect our region’s native species. Back Creek Nature Park contains several areas of both native and invasive vegetation. Wildflowers such as May Apples and Trumpet Vine can be found over wide areas along the trail network and unique to Annapolis is a grove of Persimmon trees found at the park’s entrance.

- Pocket gardens will feed birds and butterflies while providing cover for the native wildlife such as muskrats, opossum, red fox, skinks, and box turtles who live along the shores of Back Creek.
- Establishment of pocket gardens will include the control of invasive plants, such as English Ivy, which is prevalent throughout the park.

Funding for this program would enable the City to partner with volunteer environmental groups to plant and care for these gardens. (\$25,000 to \$50,000)



white pine



white oak



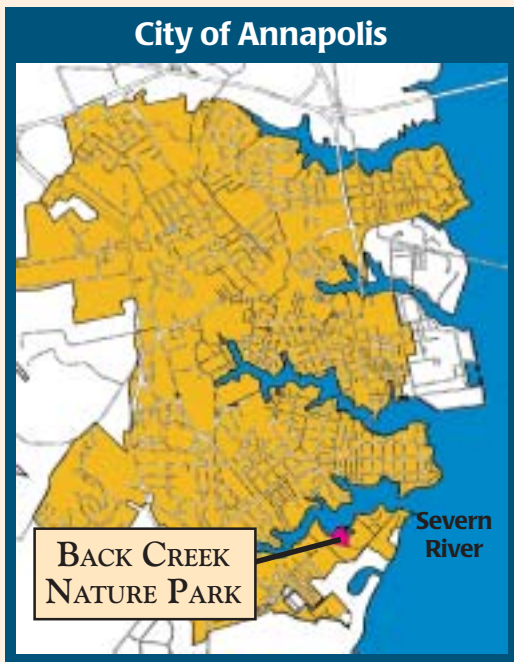
5-toed skink



box turtle



The dinghy dock





School children exploring the park



Historic waterworks building



Current park entrance

Environmental Education ~ The City would like to make Back Creek Nature Park a unique site for environmental education. The natural resources throughout the park make it an excellent classroom. At this location, visitors can safely observe many aquatic plants and animals from the docks and boardwalk. The City hopes to add informational story boards depicting points of environmental significance and important tips on what individuals can do to protect the land, air and water. Trail signs and plant/tree species identification markers can be installed to create an educational nature trail system. Several capital improvements are needed to make it easier and safer to learn about and explore the park:

- The park boasts a gazebo with a magnificent view of Back Creek. Unfortunately, through the years, improper usage of the surrounding area and the runoff from the impervious surfaces of the shelter have created erosion along the shoreline. A demonstration project with proper **shoreline stabilization** can be utilized to halt the erosion and create a learning opportunity for park visitors. (\$50,000 to \$100,000)
- A larger scale project is the conversion of the historic waterworks building into an interpretive **nature center**. The purpose of this facility would be to feature hands-on exhibits, a small classroom or gathering space, and provide park information for visitors. Exhibits may include displays and explanations of what might be encountered at the park, and offer visitors a chance to learn more about the rich natural and maritime history of Annapolis. (\$100,000 to \$200,000)
- The City would like to create a position for a **Park Ranger** at Back Creek Nature Park. Ranger presence at the park would create a well-cared for and secure feeling for all park visitors. The Park Ranger could lead daytime and evening nature programs including owl walks and wetlands workshops; care for animal habitat and native plants; and also work with the Nature Center and the volunteer groups that use the park. (\$35,000 to \$60,000)

These environmental education efforts could be sponsored in phases or as a whole.



Back Creek Nature Park from Spa Creek



Art in the Park – The City would like to provide opportunities in the park for artists to create and display their craft.

Incorporating the arts into the daily lives of Annapolitans has been a goal of the City in recent years. Studies show art creates a more pleasing experience for park visitors. For example, the City has an opportunity to contract with a notable regional sculptor, Jack Smolens, to create wooden chainsaw carvings to be placed as permanent exhibits in the park. This program would offer residents and visitors an opportunity to see a sculptor at work. To fully explore the possibility of maximizing the art in the park effort, a site assessment would be required to determine where suitable space exists.

Once a location was identified, construction of a place to house resident artists would occur along with development of a parking and transportation plan. (\$25,000 to \$45,000)



For More Information – The City of Annapolis is seeking partners to help with these endeavors at Back Creek Nature Park. If you are interested in volunteering, or making an in-kind or monetary contribution, please contact Mayor Ellen O. Moyer at (410) 263-7997, or LeeAnn Bogan at the Annapolis Recreation & Parks Department (410)-263-7958.

Court House Cupola – The City would like to restore this architectural gem back to its previous glory for all Annapolitans to see and admire.

Back Creek Nature Park is currently the storage home for the historic cupola from the old Circuit Court House on Church Circle in Annapolis. Sadly, it is fast becoming the victim of the natural elements and is in desperate need of restoration and a new home. It would make a wonderful bandstand or landmark pavilion. (\$50,000 to \$100,000)



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